

The logistical organization of the Barqa army

Noureddine Karima

Senior Lecturer Grade -A
Branch: Antique History, Faculty of Human and social Sciences
University of Mouloud Mammeri Tizi Ouzou; Algeria
Email: karima.noureddine@ummo.dz

Received date: 24.12.2024; Accepted date: 11.03.2025; Publication date: 02.04.2025

doi: 10.56334/sei/8.2.51

Abstract

The logistical organization of the Barqa army played a crucial role in ensuring military efficiency, resource distribution, and strategic mobility. This study explores the mechanisms of supply chain management, transportation, and infrastructure that supported the army's operations. By analyzing historical records and military strategies, the research sheds light on the challenges faced and the solutions implemented to sustain military campaigns. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of historical military logistics and their impact on operational success.

Keywords: Barqa army, military logistics, supply chain, transportation, infrastructure, strategy, historical military operations.

¹ **CC BY 4.0.** © The Author(s). Publisher: IMCRA. Authors expressly acknowledge the authorship rights of their works and grant the journal the first publication right under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License International CC-BY, which allows the published work to be freely distributed to others, provided that the original authors are cited and the work is published in this journal.

Citation: Karima N. (2025). The logistical organization of the Barqa army. *Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems*, 8(2), 761-774. <https://imcra-az.org/archive/358-science-education-and-innovations-in-the-context-of-modern-problems-issue-2-volviii-2025.html>

Introduction

Military logistics has historically been a decisive factor in determining the success or failure of armed forces. Effective logistics ensure that soldiers have access to the necessary supplies, transportation, and infrastructure required to maintain their combat readiness and sustain long-term operations. Throughout history, the ability of an army to effectively manage its logistical needs has been just as important as its combat strategies and tactical maneuvers. From ancient civilizations to modern warfare, logistics have remained the backbone of military strength, determining the speed, endurance, and effectiveness of military campaigns. The Barqa army, known for its military engagements and strategic positioning, required a well-structured logistical framework to support its operations, maintain its forces, and adapt to the geographical and environmental challenges it encountered.

The Barqa region, located in present-day eastern Libya, played a significant role in historical military operations due to its strategic location along key trade routes. The ability to mobilize troops, secure supply chains, and ensure the availability of food, weapons, and other essential resources was paramount to the success of the Barqa army. Given the arid climate and vast desert landscapes of the region, logistical organization was not only a necessity but also a major challenge that required careful planning and execution. The army had to navigate harsh terrain, maintain supply lines over long distances, and establish strongholds that could support sustained military activities. Understanding how the Barqa army managed these logistical complexities provides valuable insights into historical military operations and the evolution of supply chain management in warfare.

While much attention has been given to military strategies, battles, and leadership in historical studies, logistical support systems often remain underexplored. However, no army can function without a robust logistical foundation that ensures continuous access to resources. The Barqa army had to overcome logistical obstacles such as securing water and food supplies, maintaining weapons and armor, and organizing transport for troops and equipment. Moreover, the army's ability to construct and maintain supply depots, establish communication networks, and coordinate movements between different units played a fundamental role in its operational effectiveness. By examining these logistical components, this research aims to highlight the importance of military logistics in sustaining and advancing military campaigns, particularly in the challenging environment of Barqa.

This study will focus on analyzing the logistical organization of the Barqa army by exploring the methods used to secure supplies, transport troops, and manage infrastructure. By drawing upon historical records and military analyses, the research will shed light on how logistics influenced military decision-making and operational success. Furthermore, it will discuss the challenges faced by the Barqa army in managing its supply chain, as well as the innovative strategies it employed to maintain its military strength. In doing so, this study contributes to a

broader understanding of historical military logistics and their impact on warfare throughout history.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the critical role of logistics in military operations, there is limited scholarly focus on the specific logistical organization of the Barqa army. Existing research tends to emphasize military campaigns and tactics rather than the underlying support systems that enabled their execution. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing how the Barqa army managed its resources, supply routes, and transportation networks to maintain operational efficiency.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the logistical framework that supported the Barqa army's military operations.
2. To identify the main challenges faced in resource distribution, transportation, and supply chain management.
3. To examine the role of infrastructure and strategic planning in sustaining military campaigns.
4. To contribute to the broader understanding of historical military logistics and their impact on warfare strategies.

1-The Strategy of the Barqa Family in War:

When the First Punic War broke out in 264 BC after the Mamertines called for help, having suffered from the iron grip of Carthage, which did not allow "piracy" in its territories, Hamilcar's age did not exceed sixteen at the time, assuming he was born between 280 and 275 BC. This explains the lack of mention of the "Barqa family" at the beginning of this war in the sources.

The first mention of Hamilcar comes after the failure of Regulus' campaign (Marcus Atilius Regulus), where some refer to Hamilcar's call to return from Sicily after the Numidian revolt against Carthage, exploiting the difficult circumstances the city was undergoing. The harshness of war had already taken a toll on them, and the rebellion worsened their situation. After Hamilcar's victory, he imposed a tribute of 1,000 silver talents and 20,000 head of cattle.

The Carthaginians had summoned Hamilcar from Sicily after the defeat of Regulus on one side and the disaster at Cannae on the other. This move was in line with the recommendations of the major landowners who wanted to expand their estates in Africa, unlike the costly war in Sicily.

This cost them dearly, as they lost Panormus (Panormus) at the end of 254 BC, one of the most important and richest Carthaginian cities in Sicily, with a population of around 50,000. This led to the surrender of many other cities to the Romans without a fight, including Soluntum, Petra, Enna, and Tyndaris. The Romans also seized Hemera and Lipara (252-251 BC), which encouraged Rome to prepare for war starting from 250 BC by assembling a new fleet.

During this period, Carthaginian forces led by Asdrubal launched an attack to recapture Panormus. Despite using elephants, the attack failed, and Asdrubal was condemned by the Council

of One Hundred and Four and executed, further boosting Roman confidence to expel the Carthaginians from Lilybaeum, one of the most important and strongest Carthaginian cities in Sicily.

To achieve this goal, Rome appointed Consul Publius Claudius Pulcher in 249 BC to lead the fleet that besieged Lilybaeum. The city's garrison consisted of about 10,000 mercenaries under the command of Hemilcon, some of whom were mercenaries who decided to join the siege.

The Roman commanders' failure to prevent the Carthaginian relief forces from breaking the siege was due to their strategic blunders. After several months, with the siege stalled at the same point, the consul deemed it necessary to attack the Carthaginian fleet stationed at Drepanum, which was supposed to receive reinforcements from Carthage. However, unfamiliar with the location—since the port had two entrances—he found himself trapped in the open nets set by Hemilcon.

Asdrubal captured ninety-three (93) ships along with several of their crews. As for Claudius, he was able to escape with around thirty (30) ships, and the other fleet under the command of Lucius Junius Pullus, who had attempted to reach Lilybaeum to support the besieged city, suffered the same fate. After being repelled by Carthalo, it was hit by a storm that completely destroyed it off the coast of Camarina. The Carthaginians regained naval superiority, but Carthage missed the opportunity to support its positions in Sicily. Had they done so, the course of the war might have been different. Some historians considered the victory at Drepanum a great one, while Polybius described the Roman defeat as a "catastrophe beyond all expectation."

Some historians attribute Carthage's reluctance to engage militarily in Sicily to its focus on suppressing uprisings in Africa, driven by the pressure of Carthaginian taxes on the locals to fund the war. Additionally, differing interests played a role in shaping Carthage's stance on Sicily. Hanno and his supporters from the ruling oligarchy favored peace, opposing the Barca family's political agenda, as these merchants viewed state and societal matters solely through the lens of their economic interests. They believed that maintaining Carthaginian armies in Sicily was draining the state's treasury. Therefore, Hanno felt it was better to focus efforts in Africa. On the other hand, the war faction, led by Hamilcar Barca, believed it was essential to retain Drepanum and Lilybaeum to incite revolts against Rome among the subjugated peoples to undermine Roman power, as only then could Carthage achieve peace.

The peace faction, led by Hanno, ultimately prevailed, and he waged war on the Numidians. However, he agreed to send forces to Sicily, led by Hamilcar Barca, possibly as a way to remove him from Carthage and secure his own political position, while also hoping that Hamilcar's bravery and daring might work against him.

A-Hamilcar Barca in Sicily:

Hamilcar Barca took command of operations in Sicily in 247 BC, according to some sources, or in 246 BC, according to others. While some view his appointment as a way to remove him from Carthage, others see it as part of a complete renewal of leadership. During this period, Hamilcar Parpus relinquished power in favor of Hanno the Great, while Hemilcon gave up command of

Lilybaeum in favor of Gisco. Additionally, Asdrubal and his assistant Carthalon also handed over their leadership roles to Hanno.

Some have questioned the reasons behind the removal of these three commanders, arguing that such a move could only be explained by a conflict with the government, especially since their appointments were recent and their careers marked by victories. Others suggest that their victories themselves were the cause of their removal, as the success at Drepanum led to a call for these commanders to attack Rome, something that did not sit well with the ruling oligarchy. The oligarchy, seeing the return of the Fabii at the head of the Roman Republic after the Roman defeat, was aligned with the peace faction in Rome and viewed the potential for peace as more beneficial than exploiting the advantages offered by their victories.

While some of these removed commanders, such as Asdrubal and Hemilcon, belonged to the Barqa family, Hamilcar Parpus may also have had close ties to the Barqa clan. As for the newly appointed leaders, Hanno the Great was known for his allegiance to the Carthaginian oligarchy, and his adoption of and defense for the views of this class was not surprising. Gisco, too, was known for his opposition to the Barqa family, although his father Asdrubal had pursued a "middle ground" policy between the Barqa and Hanno factions.

Hamilcar's appointment under these circumstances seems rather surprising unless viewed as a concession by the ruling party to the opposition. It appears that King Bomilcar II had forged a friendship with the Barqa family, which was later solidified by marrying Hamilcar Barca's daughter. This connection might have been behind his appointment, along with the support of some elders. It is also possible that Carthage pushed him to the forefront of events due to his increasing role, despite the limited resources available to him, with the intent that any failure on his part would be seen as a failure of the common people who supported him.

Despite the limited resources Carthage provided to Hamilcar to move events forward and give them a final push, Hamilcar, upon taking up his duties, launched an attack on the Italian coasts, which had been spared by his predecessors. He carried out sabotage operations on the southern coasts up to Cumae.

In Sicily, the Barqan commander Hamilcar Barca continued to harass the Roman forces, which were already exhausted. He seized Mount Erictus (EIRKTE), and after fierce battles, he recaptured the city of Eryx, built on the slopes of the mountain of the same name. However, he was unable to break the resistance of the Roman observation posts established on the summit of the mountain.

This change in tactics may have been driven by the need to wage a purely defensive war, with the aim of attempting to free Lilybaeum and Drepanum, which had been besieged for the entire six years of his leadership in Sicily.

Hamilcar showed considerable activity, despite having only a very limited force and a few dozen ships. Nevertheless, he continuously recruited all available Roman forces on the island, which were constantly vulnerable to raids.

The war had drained both countries' resources, and their forces were weakening. However, it was the will to "win" that played the decisive role, a determination that became more specific as the stakes grew higher. In Roman eyes, Sicily was more important than it was in the eyes of the Carthaginian oligarchy, which viewed expansion in Africa as the alternative. From this perspective, the Romans saw the necessity of taking decisive action, which could only be achieved by building a powerful fleet.

Rome itself had been worn down by the war, with its treasury empty, prompting it to resort to forced loans where wealthy citizens contributed. The Senate decided to build and equip two hundred (200) quinqueremes in the early summer of 242 BC.

Gaius Lutatius Catulus led the Roman fleet to take positions off Drepanum. The Carthaginians were surprised by the Romans' new initiative and quickly prepared their own fleet. They hastily loaded it with supplies, reflecting the policy of Hanno, the leader of the merchants, who believed that the war in Sicily was costly and draining the state. It was better, in his view, to focus efforts on Africa with grain and new recruits. In March, Hanno's fleet set sail to join Hamilcar. However, upon reaching the Aegates Islands off the coast of Lilybaeum, they were attacked by Roman units, which lightened their load and had their rowers trained to maneuver effectively. The Romans won the battle, and the Carthaginians lost 120 ships, including seventy (70) that were captured, along with about 10,000 sailors.

Although the garrisons at Drepanum, Lilybaeum, and Eryx retained their positions and maintained their fighting spirit, deciding to continue resisting, Hamilcar received orders from Carthage in 241 BC to begin peace negotiations with the Romans.

B- Peace Negotiations:

It seems that the task assigned to Hamilcar was not easy, and perhaps even dangerous, as assigning this mission to him during such a sensitive and difficult time was a calculated decision by Carthage. It placed him as a shield against the nationalists who were firm in their position, as well as against the Carthaginian forces in Sicily, which had not lost their fighting spirit and were eager to continue the resistance. In this way, Carthage gave Hamilcar the authority to choose between continuing the fight without any help from Carthage, neither financial nor in terms of manpower, or negotiating a peace settlement, regardless of the terms set by Rome.

We can observe that the "merchants" in Carthage, who held power, were truly exhausted by the war. How else can we explain their decision to continue the war after the disaster at Melita in 254 BC, the defeat at Tyndaris in 251 BC, and now, when their strength in Sicily was ready to carry on fighting? Hamilcar, no doubt aware of the sensitivity of the situation, understood the importance of this mission. He knew that his appointment was intended to undermine the position of the

staunch nationalists, who could not oppose even the concessions accepted by one of their own, "Hamilcar," representing their party. Moreover, Hamilcar was not one of those hot-headed zealots who refused to acknowledge the inevitable consequences of defeat.

While some suggest that Hamilcar may have wanted revenge, even preparing his son for it, he likely understood that any future action would require political, economic, and military preparation. Thus, he saw this diplomatic mission as a way to pave the way for a future plan of action.

By assigning this task to Hamilcar, the elders were, for the first time, abandoning the "principle" of separating political and military powers, a rule they had enforced for over a century. This suggests that the elders were eager to end the war that had drained their treasury, by any means necessary, without considering the greater national interests.

Hamilcar sent a delegation to the Roman consul Lutatius Catulus to request the terms of peace. The Roman consul, who was also at the end of his consulship, sought to end the war before his term concluded. He sent a delegation back to Hamilcar with the terms of peace:

- Carthage would surrender the entire island of Sicily.
- Carthage would not fight against Syracuse or any of its allies.
- Carthage would pay a war indemnity of 2,200 talents, to be paid over a period of twenty years.
- Surrendering all Roman prisoners.
- The Carthaginian forces in Sicily must surrender their weapons and return any Roman deserters.

However, it appears that Hamilcar was firm and resolute on one point: preserving his and his soldiers' honor. He refused to consider them as prisoners of war, preferring to die fighting with a weapon in hand. This led him to oppose the final condition, which forced Catulus—who also sought peace—to cancel this clause.

The "peace treaty" was sent to the Roman Senate for ratification. However, the Senate saw these terms as too lenient, feeling that the compensation required did not match the sacrifices made. Consequently, the Senate sent a delegation to Sicily to examine the situation closely and to negotiate better terms. While this delegation added to the demands, it became evident that Rome, too, was weary from the war and seeking a truce. The final terms were as follows:

- Carthage would surrender Sicily and the islands between it and Italy (the Lipari and Aegates islands).
- Carthage would return all prisoners to Rome.
- Carthage would not wage war against Syracuse or its allies.
- Carthage would pay a war indemnity of 3,200 talents over ten years, with one-third of the sum due upon the signing of the treaty.

The treaty also included some secondary clauses, such as non-aggression toward the allies of the other party and a prohibition on the recruitment of mercenaries.

After the treaty was concluded, Hamilcar relinquished his powers, handed over his forces to Giscon, and returned to Carthage as an ordinary citizen. While some historians, including Qazal, speculate that he was deposed, it seems more likely that this retirement was voluntary. The mercenaries accused him of abandoning them, which indicates that a misunderstanding may have occurred between Hamilcar and his troops, who wanted to continue the resistance, and between Hamilcar and the Carthaginian Senate.

This withdrawal—seen as temporary by some—suggests that Hamilcar might have anticipated a conflict between the government and his former soldiers once the war ended. It was expected that he would lead a revolt and attempt to seize power by force. However, Hamilcar knew that those who had tried to seize power through violence had always failed. The people of Carthage, regardless of their status, remained united behind the Senate and the rulers, resisting any attempts by tyrants or rebels.

What happened more than once is that the petty bourgeoisie in Carthage was satisfied with the aristocratic system that knew how to protect its interests, and feared a dictatorship based on the army, with its majority of foreigners.

The pressing question is why Carthage would give up Sicily after a naval defeat that did not affect its positions in Sicily and did not diminish its basic power there, at a time when it had not done so after the disaster of Mylae in 254 BCE, nor after the defeat at Tyndaris in 251 BCE?

And if we consider that many of the fluctuations in this war were suffered by Rome, and if we try to count the naval losses, we find that Polybius notes that the Romans lost no less than seven hundred ships, including those destroyed by storms, while the Carthaginians lost much fewer, with the same historian mentioning five hundred (500) ships lost by Carthage.

This leads us to search for another reason for Carthage's abandonment of Sicily beyond the temporary military conflicts. If we acknowledge that the Punic capital, with its African borders, bore the entire burden of the war, unlike Rome, which was supported by Syracuse and its Italian allies in terms of recruitment, and the shipyards of Naples and all the great Greek cities (Elia, Locri, Tarentum) were at Rome's service, the exhaustion of Carthage and its assumptions do not explain everything.

Carthage had entered this war to defend some positions that were part of the complex measures ensuring its dominance in the western Mediterranean basin. Sicily, in its view, did not play a crucial role, as could be inferred from the terms of previous treaties it had signed with Rome, where it had never restricted or conditioned any oversight on trade relations between Rome and Carthaginian Sicily, unlike in Africa and Sardinia, where trade was subject to prohibitions and controls. Carthage considered these regions its own and, therefore, true spheres of influence. Moreover, the Carthaginian government did not realize that abandoning Sicily would lead to the

dismantling of the existing trade stations. There was a powerful faction within the Carthaginian oligarchy that pushed for accepting the "withdrawal solution" as the war was exhausting, and given the alternative of expanding in Africa, a process that was undertaken by Hanno the Great after the appointment of Hamilcar in Sicily in 247 BCE.

The policy of expansion in this Libyan region completely satisfied the elders, who had long been acquiring "estates" in the rich rural areas, where they found a sure source of wealth that compensated for the potential profits from trade operations in Sicily.

After Hamilcar received the order to negotiate with the consul Catulus and sign the truce text, it seems that Hamilcar did not want to guarantee for a long period the policy imposed by the estate owners. He entered Africa and stayed away from any activity, working on strengthening ties with the opposing faction—hostile to Hanno the Great.

After Hamilcar's resignation, Gisco, the governor of Lilybaeum, had to handle the task of disbanding the heavy army and transporting them to Africa by quickly evacuating the sites held until then by about twenty thousand (20,000) soldiers who eagerly awaited the settlement of their wage arrears, the majority of whom were professional mercenaries. Among these were Iberians, Gauls, several Ligurians, Balearics, and also half-Greeks, according to Polybius's description, as well as Libyans, who were the most numerous.

Gisco took the necessary measures for the repatriation to Africa and ensured the distribution of the trips, leaving enough time for the government to pay the units' wages based on their arrival, sending the foreigners back to their homelands, and avoiding the gathering of troops around Carthage.

However, if we know that Hanno was advocating for putting an end to the war, it was because this war required large amounts of money and led to the bankruptcy of the treasury. Additionally, the peace treaty with Rome required Carthage to pay a fine of 1,000 talents upon signing.

In these circumstances, the Punic government decided to delay the payment of wages and bonuses owed to the mercenaries, which led to a fierce war that lasted from the fall of 241 BCE until the end of 238 BCE.

2) The Mercenary Revolt and the Role of the Barca Family:

A- The Mercenary Revolt:

According to Polybius, Gisco had devised a strategy that, if applied by the Carthaginian rulers, could have spared them from a brutal war that would cost more money for the treasury. However, it seems that the financial issue concealed the political and social danger that was threatening the oligarchy.

Several factors contributed to turning this rebellion and insurrection into a social movement, giving the crisis a modern aspect, reminiscent of major class struggles on one hand, and on the other hand, giving it a "revolutionary national" character with Matheus calling upon all Libyans to

contribute to the revolution in order to lift the chains from them. The involvement of all Libyans, men and women, exceeded all expectations, thus giving the movement a truly "national" character.

Among these factors, three are noteworthy:

1. The Collective Revolution of the Proletariat – The cry of the Libyans in the countryside and cities who were resentful of the heavy taxes imposed by Hanno the Great was met with a significant response.
2. The Role of Spendius: A runaway slave from Campania, whose master was looking to crucify him, found it in his interest not to return to his homeland. He thus worked with all his might to continue the insurrection.
3. The Physical Elimination of the Officials: Those who tried to limit the movement and maintain communication with Carthage through Gisco were physically eliminated.

If these factors contributed to fueling the rebellion against Carthage, the surrounding circumstances also played a role. In addition to the traditional conflict between the "Barca Family" and the "Hanno Family," there was the rising influence of the large landowners whose interests differed from those of the majority of sailors, port workers, artisans, and small traders who formed the majority of the city populations. These groups lived directly or indirectly from the sea. The artisans and traders saw the "Catulus Treaty" as their doom, as it lifted the previously imposed customs barriers against Italian competition. Thus, the most active part of the population was ready to join the opposition behind the military leaders, who had lost their hopes.

During this period, Carthage was internally unstable while its enemies were lying in wait on its land. While Gisco, according to Polybius, had devised a method to prevent these mercenaries from gathering on Carthaginian soil, the government, under the pretext of financial difficulties, allowed them to gradually assemble, hoping to resolve the issue all at once by getting the troops to accept part of their dues. However, as their damage multiplied, their commanders were ordered to move them to Sikka (Kef) while awaiting the gathering of funds to settle their claims.

The Senate realized the seriousness of the situation and attempted to ease the tension by providing these mercenaries with food supplies, but this leniency from Carthage was met with new demands from them. After the wages, they began demanding compensation for the horses they had lost during operations in Sicily, with their price being calculated at the highest wheat price during the war years.

Thus, Gisco, who had previously earned the trust of these soldiers, went to pay their wages. He tried to persuade them and urged them to remain loyal to Carthage, but some soldiers had personal reasons to continue their "rebellion." They understood the dangers of reconciliation with those like Spendius, who joined forces with Matheus, who is also portrayed by the sources as an instigator of the unrest.

Matheus, seeking national liberation and revenge for the conditions his fellow countrymen had been subjected to, and Spendius, who sought to escape the punishment of his master, worked together to prevent any settlement with Carthage. They put "chains" on Gisco and the members accompanying him, making them prisoners of war. Thus, they found themselves in an "open war."

While some refer to this war as the "Mercenary War," Polybius recognized that this conflict had surpassed the scope of a mere mercenary rebellion and referred to it as the "Libyan War." He may have been right in doing so, considering the role of Matheus, who gave it a social and national dimension by calling upon all African tribes to contribute to the war effort. These tribes did not hesitate to respond to his call with both money and men, which enabled Matheus to pay the mercenaries' due wages and meet the revolution's needs. Polybius mentions that around seventy thousand (70,000) volunteers joined the war effort. This revolution spread easily among the local populations, who embraced it and competed to support it. Even women vowed not to spare what they had, willingly surrendering their jewelry to fund the war. Thus, what was initially described as a rebellion became a wide-ranging social revolution.

The situation became critical, so Hanno the Great was appointed to lead a force composed of mercenaries and citizens, supported by about one hundred (100) elephants. He managed to lift the siege of "Utica" but failed to capitalize on the victory due to his lack of experience in large-scale battles, as he was only accustomed to small military operations against civilians who had been exploited harshly.

Hanno's failure worked in favor of Hamilcar of Barca, who, after Gisco's capture and Hanno's loss of prestige at the walls of Utica, became the only commander capable of removing the threat to Carthage. He was called to lead without dismissing Hanno, who would work under his command.

Hamilcar, with a clever maneuver at the mouth of the Medjerda River, partially lifted the siege of Utica and defeated the Libyans and mercenaries, who lost six thousand (6,000) soldiers in battle and about two thousand (2,000) prisoners.

After this battle, which partially lifted the siege of Carthage, the situation of the war did not change, as the rebels still besieged Utica, and Matheus's forces were encamped at Hippo Acra (Bizerte), with Hanno too hesitant to approach. Despite the resistance of Utica, Matheus sent Spendius and Autaritus to confront Hamilcar, instructing them to lure him into the mountains and avoid direct confrontation in open areas. However, Hamilcar had made contact with the Numidian commander Naravas, who provided him with two thousand cavalries, and the rebels suffered another defeat in the "Saw Pass Battle," where they left ten thousand (10,000) dead and four thousand (4,000) prisoners.

After this battle, Hamilcar turned to "diplomacy" to defeat his opponents. After he managed to bring back some of his old soldiers and recruit prisoners who wished to change sides, he showed leniency toward the remaining prisoners, releasing them with the promise that they would not fight Carthage again.

The rebel leaders realized that Hamilcar's clemency was not out of goodwill but a strategic move to undermine the unity of their forces. Therefore, their response was harsh and radical, making any future attempts at reconciliation with Carthage impossible.

Some believe that Autaritus was the one responsible for escalating the war to such brutal and savage levels. It was upon his suggestion that the decision was made to torture Gisco and his companions—seven hundred (700) Carthaginian prisoners—in the most brutal way to death. Their hands were first cut off, starting with Gisco, then the rest of their limbs were severed, and they were thrown into a pit while still alive.

This cruelty led the Carthaginian Senate to demand that Hamilcar and Hanno unite their efforts and respond with equal severity and brutality, which the rebel leaders had anticipated. This would deter future rebels from surrendering and encourage relentless fighting. Hamilcar thus ordered the execution of all prisoners and decided that any future prisoners would be trampled under the feet of elephants.

Although Hamilcar followed the Senate's orders and showed no mercy to the rebels, he failed to cooperate with Hanno. The political differences between the two commanders were so vast that any cooperation was destined to fail, which the rebels took advantage of to regain control of the situation.

Carthage had to reorganize its military leadership, assigning the responsibility of choosing one of the two commanders to lead the operations solely to the soldiers themselves. This process benefitted Hamilcar, who was elected to take charge.

Hamilcar faced a dire situation, as both Utica and Hippo Acra joined the rebels. Moreover, ships carrying grain from the Emporia region to supply Carthage, which was facing famine, sank. On top of that, mercenaries in Sardinia had also rebelled.

The Carthaginians sought help from Hiero, who responded to their request, as it was in his interest to see Carthage rise and restore balance. Initially, Rome had been lenient, allowing rebels to receive grain from Italy, which caused tensions with the Carthaginian government. However, Rome, in this critical situation, asked the traders to meet Carthage's supply requests and, in return, forbade aiding the rebels, thereby ensuring respect for the terms of the "Catulus Treaty."

Meanwhile, Hamilcar gradually increased his pressure on the rebels, despite some setbacks, and weakened his enemies. He succeeded in isolating the mercenaries, cornering them in a narrow area. According to Polybius, they were forced to eat their own animals and prisoners. They decided to seek a truce, sending a delegation of ten members to Hamilcar, including Spendius and Autaritus. After agreeing that Hamilcar would choose ten hostages, he selected the ten members of the delegation, thus making Spendius and Autaritus prisoners.

Upon learning of this, the mercenaries became agitated and returned to their rebellion, with Polybius estimating their numbers at over forty thousand (40,000). However, trapped by the

Carthaginian forces and elephants, they were defeated. The war was now entering its final stages, though it remained no less violent. Tunisia was still under the control of Matheus.

Before Hamilcar launched an attack on the Libyan commander, he executed Spendius and the other prisoners at the city walls, in full view of their fellow soldiers. However, Matheus quickly retaliated. He exploited some negligence in the Carthaginian fortifications, inflicting heavy losses on the Carthaginians, even capturing Hamilcar's assistant commander, named "Hannibal." He was nailed alive to the same spot where Spendius had been crucified. Thirty Carthaginian nobles were slaughtered, and after this response, Matheus abandoned Tunisia.

Hamilcar's failure to prevent this atrocity prompted the Senate to reclaim its power in appointing commanders and, at the same time, reinstated Hanno to the leadership. A delegation of thirty succeeded in convincing the two rival commanders to work together again.

Operations continued in the Lamta area, with both sides mobilizing. The two armies met in the final battle, which resulted in a Carthaginian victory. Most of the Libyans fell in battle, the rest surrendered, and Matheus and some of his companions were captured and died under torture after a celebratory feast in Carthage.

Carthage's victory was bittersweet, but after three years of conflict, the oligarchy of the "Hannon" faction began to lose its influence in favor of the supporters of "Hamilcar," the true victor, who became the supreme commander of all Carthaginian forces in Africa.

The rebellion of the Sardinian mercenaries in 238 BCE prompted preparations for an expedition to restore order to the island. The Romans, however, saw this as a pretext to declare war. But Carthage, weakened by internal conflicts, was unable to engage in another war. As a result, Carthage ceded Sardinia and Corsica, along with an additional war indemnity of 1,200 silver talents.

In conclusion, we can deduce that this Roman stance, aimed at diminishing Hamilcar's popularity, had the opposite effect. Instead of weakening Hamilcar's faction, it actually strengthened it and made the ambition of the ruling faction more attainable. The blatant injustice triggered a sense of national pride among the Carthaginians, who became convinced of the impossibility of any lasting agreement with Rome, thus reinforcing the positions of the "Barcid" faction.

References

1. Bailly, C. (1848). *Les stratagèmes* (S. J. Frontin, Trans.). Ed. Panckouke.
2. Babelon, E. (1896). *Carthage*. Paris.
3. Combès Ganier. (1935). *Faits et dits mémorables* (V. Maxime, Trans.). Paris.
4. Combet-Farnoux, B. (1960). *Les guerres puniques* (coll. Que sais-je ?). Ed. P.U.F.
5. Diodore de Sicile. (1834-1837). *Bibliothèque historique* (A. F. Milot, Trans.). Imprimerie royale.
6. Dion Cassius. (1845-1970). *Histoire Romaine* (E. Gros, Trans.). Ed. Firmin Didot.

7. Dureau De La Malle, M. (1842). *Carthage*. Ed. Firmin Didot.
8. Florus, L. A. (1932). *Abrégé de l'histoire romaine* (P. Hanisselin & H. Watelet, Trans.). Ed. Classique Garnier.
9. Florus, P. (1967). *Œuvres* (T.1, P. Jal, Trans.). Paris.
10. Gsell, S. (n.d.). *H.A.A.N* (T.3).
11. Gilbert-Charles, P. (n.d.). *Op. cit.*
12. Hanisselin, P., & Watelet, H. (1932). *Abrégé de l'histoire romaine* (Florus, Trans.). Ed. Classique Garnier.
13. Karima N. (2025). The Policy of the Barka Family in Spain (238-219 BCE). *Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems*, Issue 1, Vol.VIII, pp. 74 - 94
14. Loc. Cit. (n.d.). p.75.
15. Pais, E. (1925). *Leçons sur les guerres puniques*. *Revue des études Anciennes*, 66, 15-66.
16. Piganiol, A. (1961). *Histoire de Rome* (M. L'Abée Paul, Trans.). Paris.
17. Piganiol, A. (1927). *La conquête Romaine*. Paris.
18. Polybius. (n.d.). *Histories* (I, 1, 50-54).
19. Polybius. (n.d.). *Histories* (I, 1, 64).
20. Polybius. (n.d.). *Histories* (I, 36, 12).
21. Roussel, D. (1970). *Les Siciliens entre les Romains et les Carthaginois à l'époque de la première guerre punique*. Université de Besançon.
22. Walter, G. (1937). *La destruction de Carthage*. Paris.